

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 INRE-00 SSM-03 ACDA-07 IO-13 OC-06 CCO-00 A-01
OPR-02 AID-05 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IGA-02 SY-05 DHA-02
ORM-02 CU-02 /121 W

-----261712Z 053972 /65

O P 261611Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2833

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 207

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

CIA WASHDC

COMSIXTHFLT

COMPHIBRON SIX

COM THREE FOUR MAU

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0323

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION JANUARY 25-26

REF: BEIRUT 276 (DTG 241517Z JAN 77)

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1. SUMMARY. THE SYRIANS ARRESTED LAA LEADER AHMED KHATIB ON JAN 25.
ABOUT 20 LEB GENDARMES HAVE ENTERED TYRE. CALM HAS RETURNED TO EAST
BEIRUT. CHRISTIAN LEADERS CLAIM PRS SARKIS WILL SHORTLY SEND ASF
TROOPS TO DAMOUR. BOTH THE SUPREME ISLAMIC COUNCIL AND SYRIAN MOUTH-
PIECE KAMIL HCATILA HAVE CRITICIZED THE KFUR FRONT FOR ENDORSING
"PLURALITY." THE GOVT HAS FINALLY ISSUED A DECREE PROVIDING FOR THE

RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD. THE SURETE GENERALE HAS LIFTED PRIOR CENSORSHIP FOR FOREIGN PRESS AGENCIES. END SUMMARY.

2. ARREST OF AHMED KHATIB. DATT AND OTHER SOURCES REPORT THAT SYRIAN ASF SOLDIERS ARRESTED LEBANESE ARAB ARMY COMMANDER AHMED KHATIB AND TOOK HIM TO DAMASCUS ON JAN 25. THE SYRIANS ALSO OCCUPIED TWO LAA BARRACKS IN WEST BEIRUT. SEVERAL DAYS AGO THE SYRIANS HAD WARNED THE LAA TO LEAVE THEIR BARRACKS. OLDER LAA OFFICERS HAD FAVORED COOPERATING WITH THE SYRIANS, BUT KHATIB AND YOUNGER OFFICERS RESISTED THE TAKEOVER,

THUS BRINGING ABOUT THE CONFRONTATION. AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SYRIAN CHECKPOINTS AND PATROLS RELATED TO THIS ACTION CAUSED SOME SCHOOLS AND SHOPS TO CLOSE IN WEST BEIRUT.

3. LEBANESE GENDARMES IN TYRE. ABOUT 20 LEBANESE GENDARMES ENTERED TYRE ON JAN 25 TO ESTABLISH A TOKEN PRESENCE THERE. WE HAVE NO REPEAT NOT INDICATION THAT SYRIAN OR OTHER ASF SOLDIERS HAVE ENTERED THE CITY.

4. EAST BEIRUT CALM. CALM HAS RETURNED TO THE CHRISTIAN AREA OF EAST BEIRUT AND ITS SUBURBS. SCHOOLS AND STORES ARE OPEN: TRAFFIC IS NORMAL

CHRISTIAN LEADERS PIERRE GEMAYEL AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN HAVE BOTH MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS EMPHASIZING THE SYRIAN ARMY IS AN ALLY AND NOT AN OCCUPATION FORCE. DATT AND OTHER SOURCES NOW REPORT THAT ONLY ONE SYRIAN SPECIAL FORCES BN (WITH A MAXIMUM STRENGTH OF 350) ENTERED THE AREA OVER THE WEEKEND. SOME SYRIAN SOLDIERS REMAIN, BUT APPARENTLY AT A REDUCED LEVEL (SEE BEIRUT 312.).

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5. CHRISTIAN LEADERS SEE PRES. THE FOUR PALADINS OF THE KFUR FRONT-- PIERRE GEMAYEL, SULEIMAN FRANGIE, CAMILLE CHAMOUN, AND FATHER KASSIS -- MET WITH PRES SARKIS FOR THREE HRS ON JAN 25. AT A PRESS CONF AFTER-

WARDS, PHALANGE CHIEF GEMAYEL SAID "WE ARE ALL WORKING AGAINST PARTITION AND CONFESSIONALISM." FORMER PRES CHAMOUN REMARKED THAT: A) PRES SARKIS HAD PROMISED TO IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO ACCORDS WITHIN TWO WEEKS; AND B) THE ASF WOULD SHORTLY ENTER DAMOUR (A FORMER CHRISTIAN VILLAGE ON THE COAST BETWEEN BEIRUT AND SIDON NOW INHABITED LARGELY BY

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES.)

6. SUPREME ISLAMIC COUNCIL REJECTS PARTITION. THE SUPREME ISLAMIC COUNCIL, WHICH REPRESENTS THE CONSERVATIVE SUNNITE LEADERSHIP OF LEB, MET ON JAN 25. SOPKESMAN CHAFIC WAZZAN ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE REAFFIRMING

"OPPOSITION TO ANY FORM OF PARTITION OF FACTIONALIZATION." HE ALSO NOTED THE COUNCIL WOULD STUDY THE JAN 23 RESOLUTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN

KFUR FRONT (WHICH CALLED "PLURALITY" THE "KEystone OF A UNIFIED LEB")

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7. CHATILA ALSO CRITICIZES FRONT. KAMIL CHATILA, A SELF-STYLED "NASSERIST" POLITICIAN WIDELY REGARDED AS A SYRIAN MOUTHPIECE, ALSO STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE KFUR FRONT'S JAN 23 RESOLUTIONS. HE SAID THEIR ENDORSEMENT OF CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL INDEPENDENCE WAS "ACTUALLY A MOVEMENT TOWARDS SOCIAL PARTITION WHICH WOULD CONSECRATE FOREVER TOTAL PARTITION." CHATILA ADDED THAT "ONLY NATL INTERGRATION AND NOT CULTURAL MULTIPLICITY CAN SOLVE THE COMPLEXITIES OF CONFESSIONALISM"

8. RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD ANNOUNCED. ON JAN 24 THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ISSUED A DECREE-LAW PROVIDING FOR THE LONG-AWAITED RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD, WHICH WILL COORDINATE ALL RECON-
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STRUCTION ACTIVITIES IN THE COUNTRY AND REPLACE THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING. PREMIER AL-HOSS TOLD THE PRESS THE SAME DAY THAT THE DECREE-LAW WAS NOT YET EFFECTIVE, HOWEVER, BECAUSE A CHAIRMAN HAS NOT BEEN CHOSEN. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE BOARD WOULD HAVE 12 MEMBERS (SEE BEIRUT 306).

9. CENSORSHIP RULES EASED FOR FON AGENCIES. THE SURETE GENERALE HAS INFORMED FOREIGN PRESS AGENCIES THAT THEY NEED NOT SUBMIT THEIR STORIES FOR CENSORSHIP PRIOR TO PUBLICATION, BUT MUST SUBMIT THEM FOR REVIEW WITHIN 24 HOURS AFTER FILING. IF PROHIBITED MATERIAL IS NEVER-
THE LEES PUBLISHED, THE AGENCIES WILL STILL THEORETICALLY BE SUBJECT TO THE PENALTIES OF THE JAN 1 DECREE LAW IMPOSING CENSORSHIP (SEPTELS).
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